

Some Impressions of a Parson After Ten Years in the Religion-Labour Field.

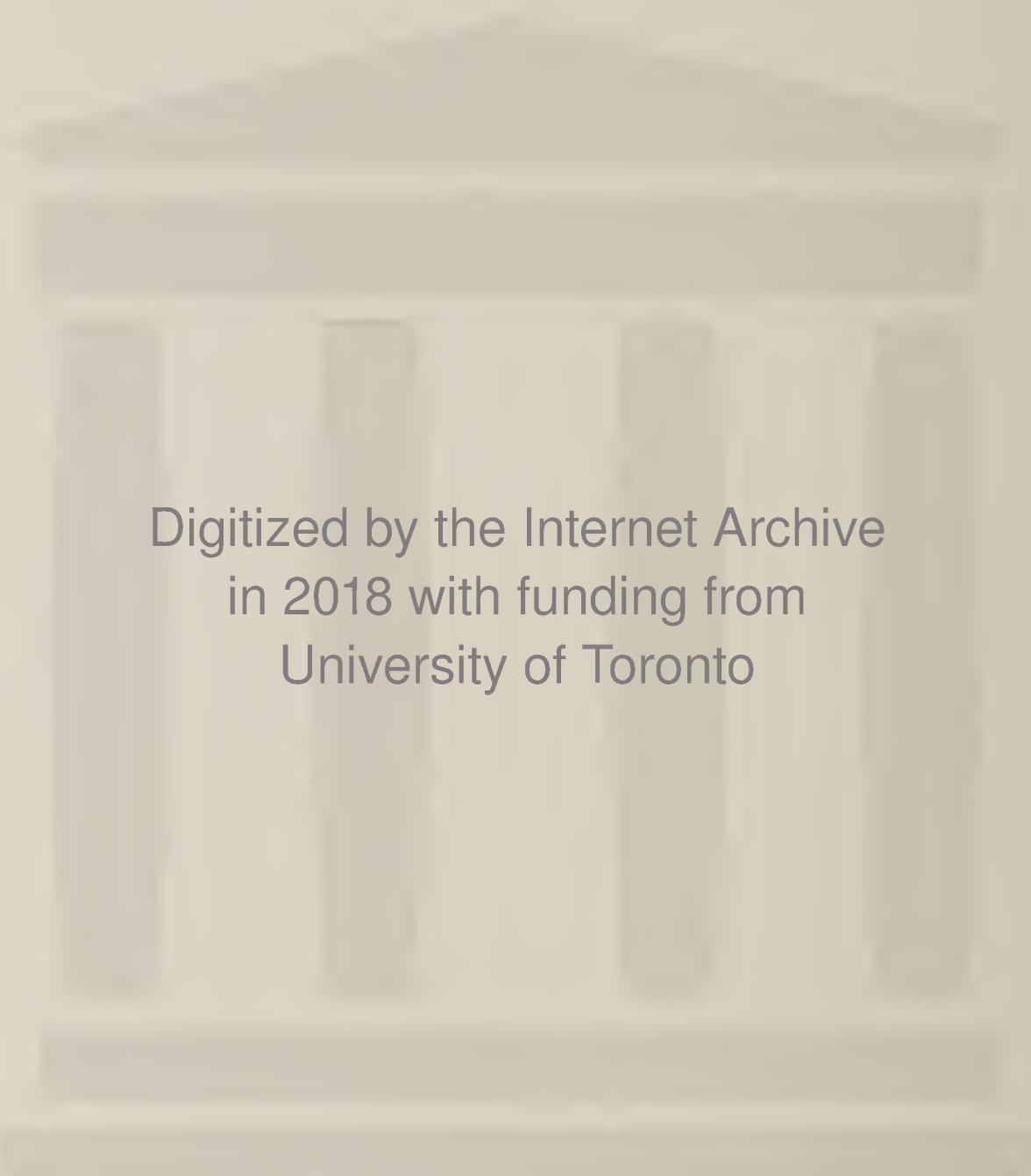


REV. E. HAROLD TOYE
Executive Secretary
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These addresses, delivered to a group of interested clergy and labour leaders, have been printed upon the request and at the expense of Organized Labour.





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FOREWORD

C. H. Millard

National Director, United Steelworkers of America.

Pressing Union duties made it impossible for me to attend the special luncheons at which Mr. Toye delivered the following lectures. At my request, however, copies were sent to me following each address and as a Labour leader and a Church layman I found them most stimulating and challenging.

After thinking through some of the implications of these addresses I believe it would be very unfortunate if they did not receive a much wider circulation. For that reason I made the request, on behalf of Labour, that they be printed in pamphlet form and sent, at our expense, to all the clergy in the Province. I am very happy that Mr. Toye had acceded to my request.

While I realize that these lectures were prepared more particularly for the clergy I am sure there have come to him some significant impressions in respect to the Labour Movement. Therefore, I have asked Mr. Toye if he would be willing to do for Labour leaders what he has done for the ministers and he has given his consent.

This pamphlet is being sent in the fervent hope that it may help to create a better understanding and closer co-operation between the two powerful democratic institutions, Organized Religion and Organized Labour.

INTRODUCTION

Rev. E. Harold Toye

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Religion-Labour Foundation

Following a series of strange events and experiences, more than ten years ago, I found myself exercising my ministry in an entirely new field as the executive secretary of the Religion-Labour Foundation. This new movement represented a group of socially minded folk, some of them active in the Church and some rather "fed up", who were quite agreed that the world's only hope was to be found in obedience to the teachings of the Hebrew prophets and Jesus. As they considered the amazing industrial development during recent years they became convinced that the crucial need of the hour was to make vital religion relevant to and redemptive in man's common life. They could not accept the rather widely held view that the Jewish-Christian faith was a purely "spiritual" affair but insisted that it applied to the whole of life, social, economic, political, national and international. They were not satisfied with the witness of Organized Religion on the bread and butter level.

The big question, of course, was "how, at this stage, can the problem be best handled". They came to see that two of the most powerful institutions in our contemporary society were Organized Religion and Organized Labour. And since these two powerful institutions did hold certain aims in common they began to dream of what might be achieved through a better understanding and closer co-operation between them. For more than a decade the R-L.F. has carried on under the inspiration of that dream and has laboured to make it come true.

As executive secretary of this organization my ministry in this new parish of religion-labour relations has been a unique and revealing experience. And I want to take this opportunity to express to my own Church, (The United Church of Canada) my thanks for granting the request, year after year, that "I be left without a station to engage in the work of Industrial Evangelism".

Early this past summer, I came to feel a sense of obligation in return for this special consideration and was moved to share with my brethren some of the impressions which have come to me in the process of this ministry which took me across new frontiers into an unexplored and neglected area. In consultation with some of my friends, both Church and Labour, it was decided that I should attempt to do this for the clergy in the Toronto area at a series of three luncheons. This pamphlet contains the three addresses that were given and is sent to you at the request and with the compliments of Labour. And I would like, at this point, to express my sincere gratitude for the fine co-operation given to the R-L.F.

by both sections of the Canadian Labour Movement and for help received from some of the International Unions. Also for the fellowship I have enjoyed with those labour leaders who dare to regard their movement not simply as another secular organization but as a potential ally of the Kingdom.

May I point out that these papers do not carry the endorsement of any person or group but are simply the frank and honest statement of some impressions made upon me in a type of ministry which is unique. For that reason they do not call for proof or argument but are "impressions" passed along for what they are worth. My concern is to keep faith with my brethren.

Reflections of a Parson

After Ten Years in the Religion-Labour Field

As a result of the experiences of the past more than a decade in the field of religion-labour relations I have become convinced that the most crucial question for which the Church must find an answer is this: "How are we to communicate the Gospel in a world that is so radically different from the world our fathers knew?" Of course this is not the first time the Church has had to face this problem. History proves that every institution has to adjust itself to an ever changing environment if it is to survive and the Church can be no exception to this rule. Even within my own ministry there was a time when we preachers were deeply concerned about preserving the validity of the Gospel. We saw the breath-taking impact that science was making upon the minds of men. The Christian message had to be proclaimed upon the background of a veritable flood of new knowledge and the early part of my ministry was, to a considerable degree, devoted to an effort to make the Gospel intellectually respectable. A lot of people were coming to the conclusion that there was a very serious conflict between faith and reason and it began to look as though reason was going to win at the expense of faith. It was imperative, therefore, that the Christian faith be presented in a way that would not insult the intelligence of those who had mastered vast new knowledge. That was a real challenge and those were difficult days. The Higher Criticism battle was on and it had very serious repercussions in the old Methodist Church of which I was a minister.

Now that struggle was inevitable but, thank God, it has been won for only belated minds, to-day, suppose that Christianity must be thought of in pre-historic and unscientific terms. For the past more than ten years my work has assigned me to a rather unique parish and I found myself working in close association with the Organized Labour movement. As a result of this experience I would not regard these folk as deeply religious, at least in the orthodox meaning of that term. It is true that some of them are members of the Church but I soon discovered that the less I had to say about it the better I got along. There were times when I had to listen to some rather pointed criticism and what made me most uncomfortable was just the fact that I realized that some of it was quite justified. But the point I want to make is that never once during these years of intimate association with the working people did I hear any denial of the Christian faith or any doubt expressed in respect to its validity. No my problem, to-day, is not the problem with which I had to grapple in my early ministry. My problem now is "how am I to gain the ear and challenge the consciences of men in a new world situation?" For the stern fact of history is that we are not having too much success at the present time. We need to be reminded that the Church has to carry on its work, to-day, in a world that is largely pagan and in which practicing christians are only a small minority. True we have called ourselves

christians and as such have acknowledged our duty to send the Gospel to the people in other distant lands. And that is a thrilling chapter in the Church's history, surely. But while we were diligently engaged in an effort to publish the Glad Tidings abroad paganizing forces were at work at home and secularism was eating into the moral and spiritual fabric of our society. The result is that millions of the people to whom we sent our missionaries are now suspicious and resentful of our Western culture and have ordered our missionaries home.

And here is another paradox. We are raising more money, to-day, burning more mortgages, building more new churches, boasting a more highly educated ministry and finer music and adding more names to our Church rolls than ever before but crime increases, moral standards are declining, secularism threatens to engulf us while our social, economic and political institutions find it increasingly difficult to handle our human affairs. Whatever the reason and wherever the blame the fact is that we are not as successful as we ought to be in communicating the Gospel in a manner that impresses men with its majesty, its relevance, its imperial demands.

Now since this business of communicating the Gospel in a strange new world is so involved, so difficult, so urgent I make no claim to have solved the problem. There are two things I want to say about it, however. The first is this that the gospel we are trying to communicate must be the whole Gospel. There is a serious and hampering confusion among christians at the present time because for so many Christianity is thought of as a purely spiritual affair and our loyalty to Christ a purely spiritual loyalty. Acting upon the recommendation of the Commission which the Religion-Labour Foundation sent to Northern Ontario to study the Miners' strike a delegation was sent to Ottawa to make certain recommendations to the Federal government. One of the members of that delegation was a highly respected minister of our Church. One of the Cabinet Ministers expressed great surprise that a clergyman should get mixed up with such a presentation. (We learned later that this Minister was a prominent member of a United Church in the West) Well contrary to the claims of this politician the truth is that the claim of Christ is a total claim and is valid over the whole of life, public as well as private, material as well as spiritual, economic, political, national as well as international.

I do not know who it was who originated the term "the simple Gospel" but may the good Lord have mercy on him. Brethren, we had better believe it, there is nothing simple in being a christian in our present kind of world. Any brand of Evangelism that glosses over that fact is not good enough for this confused, fear stricken generation no matter how large the crowd it attracts or the number of those who sign cards and join some church. Of course we thank God for any ministry that make men more honest, persuade them to stop drinking and give up playing the ponies. But that is not the whole Gospel. We need a brand of Evangelism to-day that will carry us out into vast unoccupied territory, across dangerous frontiers, into the mad melee of modern industry, into the dark jungle of race relations, into the devious schemes of reactionary poli-

ticians, into the wild scramble for balance of power among the nations. Is there anything simple or easy about a program like that? But that is what is involved if we are to communicate the Gospel to our kind of world.

And secondly, the communication of the Gospel in our strange new world demands a new strategy which we will have to discover in intimate fellowship with Jesus Christ thru' the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit. Ralph Waldo Emerson tells us that one day he and his son were trying to get a calf into the barn. The son was pulling from the front and the great philosopher was pushing from behind but the calf refused to move. A young Irish girl, only a few weeks away from the old sod, came to the back porch and stood laughing at what she saw. Then she came out and put her fingers into the calf's mouth and gently guided it into the barn. Commenting on this incident, Prof. Halford Luccock says "that Irish girl knew how her audience took in ideas". That is what we preachers have got to learn. We will have to deal with people where they are and show an understanding of their conscious needs.

Now what are the two points at which human destiny is being determined to-day? They are the economic and the political. These are the tension areas in the modern world. The fact is that we are faced with a new social phenomenon. The masses of the common people around the world have struck their tents and are on the move. They do not know where they are going but they are sure they are on the way. They have made up their minds to two things. First, they are no longer content to starve in a world of potential plenty. Second, they demand to be treated with dignity and respect and are determined to have some say in the fashioning of their own destiny. This is the climate in which we now have to communicate the Gospel. Speaking to a Conference of the Canadian Womens' Press Club a little over a year ago Dr. Hugh Keenleyside, Director General of the U. N. Technical Assistance Program, had this to say: "Over half the people of the world are ill and will die before the age of 35. Over half have a cash income of less than \$100.00 a year. This means that over half the people of the world are hungry most of the time. They need assistance to grow food, build hospitals, to sell their goods in the world's markets." I wonder how many of you recall an editorial in the Christian Century about a year ago which was headed "Suffocation through Surpluses". It went on to say that the government of the United States was staggering under surpluses, - 15 months supply of wheat, 9 months supply of cotton, 8 months supply of cottonseed oil, 8 months supply of dried milk. It reported that there were 275 million pounds of butter stored in rented caves and warehouses. Almost of the same date it was announced in our own Canadian Parliament that we were carrying 614 millions bushels of surplus wheat. Can we not see, my brethren, that unless we can make the Gospel relevant and redemptive on the bread and butter level we are not likely to receive much of a hearing. That is the way the people of the world to-day are most likely to take in ideas.

Or take this business of politics. Here again we will have to adopt techniques in communicating the Gospel which will get close to actual experience and use language that the common people can understand.

Take for example the problem of Peace. Everybody is interested in that and we had better be. The Church has always advocated peace and has faithfully presented Jesus Christ as the Prince of Peace. We have pretty well taken it for granted that if only a sufficient number of people would accept Jesus Christ and enlist in the Christian Cause then automatically we would have peace. But now we can see that millions of people, to-day do want peace and they hate war but that has not brought peace. The fact is that if the vast majority of people in every land wanted peace and hated war that would not guarantee a warless world. Peace has become, at bottom a political problem. In a world that has become unified in such a variety of ways, we just cannot handle our real and vital interests with our present political structure. We will have to surrender something of our national sovereignty, we will have to overhaul our tariff restrictions, we require some form of world government that will facilitate the mutually beneficial and peaceful regulation of human affairs. Let us not forget that any communication of the Gospel that does not demonstrate its relevance to the experience and actual needs of those to whom it is addressed will fall upon dull ears and leave men uninterested and unmoved. Thus the old notion that politics must be kept out of the pulpit will have to be revised. We will have to deal with people where they are and show an understanding of their conscious needs.

In his "Life of General Sherman," Lloyd A. Lewis tells of an incident in the battle of Shiloh where a teamster was struggling to draw a gun carriage through the mud of a river bank. A well meaning evangelist seized on that moment to do some evangelistic work. In a deep clerical voice he said to the teamster "do you know, sir, Who died on a Cross?" Without even so much as looking up the teamster replied "don't ask me any riddles, I'm stuck in the mud". That is exactly what multitudes of people are saying to us in the Church, to-day. That is our challenge and it is likewise our hope.

Dr. Luccock in his Lyman Beecher lectures for 1953 has this to say: "The time when people really learn is when they are deeply in need. There is a great host of people who are saying not 'I will arise and go unto my father' but they have got as far as the barnyard and they do not like it and do not want to stay there and dine upon the husks. They feel and say 'it does not taste good'. It does not add up to what it might" It follows, therefore, that if we are to have any success in communicating the Gospel we will have to identify ourselves with people in the barnyard areas, come to understand and feel their experiences and make clear to them what the Christian faith has to offer to their plight. One of the most alarming aspects of Russian propaganda is just the fact that while it is full of lies and false promises it, nevertheless, goes down to the grass roots of human need, is close to the experience of people and is communicated in language that they can easily understand.

What surprises, what thrills, what triumphs await those adventurous souls who are ready to break through convention, cross over the line of pious respectability and fare forth with Christ into the barnyard areas of life. Our hope, to-day, lies in an ever increasing number of those

who are prepared to put some imagination, some initiative, some sacrifice into religion and confront men in all walks of life with the Eternal God Who holds our destiny in His hands.

LECTURE NUMBER 2

At our last meeting I tried to describe the world climate in which the Church has to carry on its work to-day. We observed that the two points at which human destiny is being determined are, 1st. the economic and 2nd. the political. It is at these two points that the present witness of the Church is weakest. Our conclusion was that if we cannot make Christianity relevant and redemptive on the bread and butter level almost everything else we are doing is too little and too late.

Let us begin by recalling the incident of Jesus' visit to the synagogue in Nazareth on a certain Sabbath Day, recorded for us in the 4th. chapter of St. Luke's gospel. The minister in charge of the service that morning asked Jesus to read the Scripture. Selecting a passage with great care and with a profound spiritual insight He proceeded to interpret its meaning in relation to a situation in which His hearers were immediately involved. That is a very dangerous thing for a preacher to do and it worked out just that way for Him. The Jews of Jesus day were very proud. Had they not been chosen as "the covenant people" and had not Jehovah promised that some day their enemies would be made to lick the dust? But He proceeded to tell them that God had no favorites among the sons of men and that the only way a final victory could be won was in sacrificial obedience to the moral and spiritual demands of a righteous God. His audience had no difficulty in understanding His meaning. He had wounded their pride and they became very angry. They thrust Him out of the synagogue, hounded Him down the street to the brow of a precipice and threatened to throw Him over. Now here is a good text to preach from: "And when He had opened the book HE FOUND THE PLACE WHERE IT WAS WRITTEN". He had chosen from the scriptures an eternal truth and proceeded to make it relevant and dynamic in a concrete contemporary situation. We preachers will have to recover His art and follow His example if we are to have any success in communicating the Gospel to a world in which our pulpit messages do not seem to be registering.

Now in what I have been saying thus far I am not suggesting that it is the Church's chief task to present a blueprint of a social and economic order that will guarantee every man a job, adequate wages to the workers and a liberal pension upon retirement. Of course all these things are important and must not be ignored but a full dinner pail, a well-stocked refrigerator, even a 21 inch television in the living room is no guarantee of a full life. Our major responsibility is to confront men with a righteous God in obedience to whose Will man can alone find salvation. That man is a fool who imagines that we can with our own cleverness, our wonder-

ful technological skills, our scientific achievements and our amazing productive powers achieve our own salvation. It is eternally true that unless the Lord build the house they labour in vain who build it. Secularism is no answer to the world's needs and mankind waits for some authentic answer to the age-old question "what shall we do to be saved?" Optimistic rationalism is not enough. In the chaos and confusion of the hour mankind is engaged in a life and death struggle with God and we shall find our peace only in a surrender to His righteous will. The Christian Gospel prescribes not increased doses of aspirin but a major operation.

One thing has become clear to me, however, that if we are to have any success in communicating the Gospel in a strange new world we must rescue Christianity from ecclesiastical professionalism and institutional officialdom. Religion has become too largely the special preserve of preachers and its implementation, in the main, a matter of official pronouncement and action. But the best way to communicate ideas is to wrap them up in persons. That is what God did in the Incarnation. The best way to communicate the Gospel, to-day, is through dedicated lay folk who are not hampered by ecclesiastical proprieties and rules nor bogged down in the conventional routine which is taken by so many to be the distinguishing mark of Organized Religion. Of course, preachers are important and the institutions of religion must be encouraged and supported. We preachers may be a poor lot but the world would be in a much worse mess without us. However, it is high time we recalled that Christianity did not begin as a preachers' movement but won its triumphs through consecrated lay folk who, having received a mighty baptism of the spirit of Jesus, refused to be ruled by the conservatism of the Temple and synagogue and were not willing to wait for the official sanction of the priests and elders. They were the storm troopers of the Kingdom of God, saying things that the priests were not saying, overleaping barriers which ecclesiastical propriety could not hurdle and transcending traditions that officialdom regarded as sacred and for that reason not subject to change.

This may be treading on rather dangerous ground but I have become quite convinced that the Church is not the only institution through which God is working to build His Kingdom and the preacher is not the only evangelist with a virile and authentic message to this generation. I have often wondered just what New Testament authority we can claim for restricting, so largely, the title minister to those who have completed a certain course in theology and complied with certain ecclesiastical requirements and thus become eligible to have Reverend written before their name. A minister is one who ministers and while the early Christians recognized a division of labour it, at the same time, insisted upon the universality of responsibility among its members. It is a tragedy that so many church members, expect religious duties to be performed by persons of a professional class. That state of affairs will have to be corrected somehow and it is imperative that we recover the ministry of the laity.

Surely no one will ever accuse us preachers of failure to present the ethical ideals and spiritual values contained in the Hebrew prophets and

Jesus. That is not where our weakness is to be found. Our trouble is that we have too long been content with proclaiming the truth while we failed to provide techniques through which the truth could be implemented in concrete situations. For example, I am confident that most of us are sure that a profit-making economy ought to be transformed into a personality-making economy. But the practical man-of-affairs interrupts and asks "how do you propose to make the shift?" And to that question we just have not any answer. Every preacher insists that we ought to substitute the motive of service for the selfish motive of the inquisitive instinct but we forget that that is a complicated engineering job and presupposes the serious consideration of the mechanics required to bring it about. There is never any objection raised so long as we talk about spiritual values but when some of the most highly respectable clergymen in the U.S. dared to suggest some practical ways of translating these values into actualities they were hauled before Senator McCarthy's committee. If we are to have any success in communicating the Gospel in our kind of world the engineering and organizing genius of the world must master the mechanics essential to the realization of valid ethical ideals. That, it seems to me, is essentially a job for lay folk.

There is a truly great phrase tucked away in the 27th. Psalm. I wonder if some of us may have missed it: Here it is: "One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the House of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord "AND TO ENQUIRE IN HIS TEMPLE"". That is what we are supposed to do in the temple, not only to engage in holy contemplation but to use our minds, to enquire. The fact is, however, that the last thing a lot of people ever do when they are in the temple is to bring the mind to the task of thinking through the meaning and implications of the Christian Faith. They sing, they pray, they keep silence, they give and so they should but what we need to-day is more enquiring.

During the past 10 years I have been greatly encouraged by the number of people I have found, some of them in the Church and some who never go to Church, who are deeply concerned about the mess the world is in and they are desperately anxious to do something about it. They are not much interested in the ecclesiastical proprieties which mean a great deal to some of us. They are not greatly impressed the fine resolutions we pass from time to time for they expect that they soon will be forgotten. They accept many of the ethical ideals that are proclaimed from the pulpit so faithfully but they want some guidance and help in deciding what these ideals involve in the situation in which they have to live their lives.

A little while ago I spoke to a group of young men in their regular Sunday afternoon class. At the close one of them, a member and an official of that Church, took me aside for a chat. He had had his first experience as a political candidate in the last election. He wanted to know what being a Christian involved in that situation. Frankly I had to tell him I did not know. I had never been through a provincial or federal election as a candidate and consequently was in no position to pass judgment. But that young man was serious and he had a perfect right to expect that he could find help "enquiring in the temple."

Or here is a labour leader in a very responsible official position with some 35000 men depending upon him. He was facing a very crucial decision and so he came to me and asked me what was involved in being a Christian in a spot like that. One reason he came to me was because we were close friends but he came also because deep down inside he felt that he had a right to expect some help from a preacher who did so much talking about ethical and spiritual values. Now I greatly admired this fellow and was willing to do all I could to help him but I had to admit that I was not qualified to give an answer to his question. While some of my labour friends tell me that I belong to one of the tightest unions in the world, the fact is that I have never been a member of a labour union, say nothing about being a leader, and how could I know what was involved in being a Christian in that situation?

To the extent to which this interest and concern indicate a recovery of the ministry of the laity I believe that it provides the most promising medium available to us for the communication of the Gospel. My deepest concern at the present time as a minister is to do whatever I can to facilitate (as an integral part of enquiring in His temple) an increasing number of little fellowships among these impatient and adventurous souls who are no longer content to have religion. on its professional level, simply proclaim its ethical idealism but are dedicated to the engineering and organizing task of translating these values into actualities.

I wonder if this personal experience will help you get the point I am trying to make. A few months ago the Carpenters and Joiners Union completed the building of a magnificent new Labour Hall. Doubtless some of you have seen it as it is located at the corner of Pembroke and Gerrard Streets. One day I received a letter asking me to attend the opening and conduct a special Dedication service. Now that was a real puzzler and I was scared. What did I know about dedicating a Labour Hall? If it had been the dedication of a Church I would have been perfectly at home. I would only have had to reach for my book of Common Order and the proper procedure was set forth in detail. But a Labour Hall, - that was different. Whatever else might happen I felt deeply that there would have to be a special dedicatory prayer. But I had no idea where to look for help in the preparation of such a prayer. I was on my own and it was not easy. However, I accepted the invitation. The day of the gala opening arrived and at the appointed hour I found myself sitting on the platform along with a number of dignitaries and prominent Labour officials. The place was crowded. Just before the dedication ceremony the soprano soloist sang in fine voice that beautiful sacred classic "The Lord's Prayer". Then came my turn and I was still scared. In a brief address I tried to say 2 things. First, I suggested that the Labour movement had come to a place of efficiency and power for just such an hour as this and, in an expanding industrial civilization, was essential to the successful working of democracy. Second, I said I coveted for Labour leaders something of the same sense of Divine call as that which took me into the ministry of the Church and pled with them to recognize in their great movement a potential ally of the Kingdom of God. Then followed the prayer of Dedication and another solo. And what do you think the soloist sang this time? "Bless this house, Oh! Lord we pray".

The service was over. Of course I have felt the Presence of God as I participated in the exercises of dedicating a Church but, brethren, I was never surer of God than I was that day when we dedicated a Labour Hall. Therefore, I repeat what I said last meeting, 'our hope lies in an ever increasing number of those who will put some imagination, some initiative, some vision, some sacrifice into religion and confront men in all walks of life with the Eternal God who holds human destiny in His hands.'

LECTURE NUMBER 3

The Gospel records make it clear that Jesus' interpretation of history convinced Him that He was living at the end of an Age. While He faced the future all unafraid He saw troublous days ahead. He spoke about wars and commotions, about nation rising against nation and kingdom against kingdom. It was to be a time of real testing for His disciples. They would be delivered up to the synagogues, cast into prison, brought before kings and rulers, betrayed by parents and brethren and kinsfolk and friends and some of them would be put to death. He foresaw famines, pestilences and earthquakes. In other words, He perceived that history was running into a head-on collision with the moral facts of the universe and the judgments of a righteous God were abroad in the earth.

And the Gospels are clear upon another matter, also, namely that Jesus did not expect that in such a critical situation the official institutions of conventional religion were likely to provide the creative and redemptive leadership so desperately needed. According to both John the Baptist and Jesus religion was in a really bad way. A lot of people had passed it up altogether. They had become suspicious and resentful of the brand of religion which they heard and saw all about them and, like the people of Russia at the time of the revolution, they deliberately dismissed it as the opiate of the people. And then there were others who were just plain indifferent, pre-occupied with other, and to them, more important matters. They were not opposed to religion and made no attempt to destroy its institutions but just shrugged their shoulders and dismissed its claims as quite irrelevant and of small consequence. And then there were still others who worked overtime in a frantic effort to keep the institutions of religion going. And I am sure Jesus must have felt a great deal of sympathy with these people. I imagine His attitude toward them would be fairly expressed in the message addressed to the church at Ephesus, recorded in the Book of the Revelation: "I know thy works and thy labours and thy patience and how thou canst not bear them which are evil, — and hast borne and hast patience and for my name's sake hast laboured and hast not fainted, — Nevertheless, I have somewhat against thee".

As a matter of record, however, Jesus did not expect the adventurous leadership that was so sorely needed to come from these devout people.

These staunch religionists were the slaves of tradition, stubbornly refusing to liberate religion from the shackles of outmoded institutions and orthodoxies that were strangling it to death. There were a few brave souls, however, who in fellowship with Jesus had found new meaning in the Good News of the Kingdom and were ready to tear off the chains of formalism and fare forth as the pioneers of a new day, prepared to accept all the pain and penalty which are the lot of the pioneer. These for Jesus were the hope of the future and so there came a point in His ministry when He turned from the multitude and the religious dignitaries and concentrated upon the instruction and training of the chosen few. It should always be remembered that it was to a little group of His followers and not to the recognized religious leaders that He gave the promise "Fear not, little flock it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the Kingdom".

Need I remind you that we too are living at the end of an Age? History is catching up with us too, and the world is running into another head-on collision with the moral facts of the universe. The judgments of a righteous God are abroad in the earth. That world with which we are so familiar and which, so we thought, was to guarantee our peace and plenty, has come to an end. Who would have imagined, fifty years ago, that the British Empire would, within our life time, be found in the position which she occupies to-day, with her former imperial glory faded and waging such a noble battle to save herself from bankruptcy? Not much wonder that her recent withdrawal from the Suez Canal zone caused such a commotion in the Old Land. The world of the old haughty imperialisms has come to an end.

And the age of isolationism has come to an end too. There was a time when powerful nations could order their own affairs and go their own way. Even when one country went to war with another country the conflict was largely confined to one area and the rest of the world went its own way. But no longer is that true. It seems now that every war turns into a global upheaval in which every nation, sooner or later, becomes involved with all of them facing the possibility of extinction.

And the economic system which developed out of the industrial revolution with its basic assumption of laissez faire, that is gone too, in spite of the frantic efforts some people are still making to preserve it. It just will not work for us as it did for our fathers. We have reached a stage in our development where it looks as though our present system of monopoly capitalism can function profitably only in the midst of war or the threat of war which results in vast defence expenditures. At the present time we are witnessing some disturbing evidences of this fact with increasing unemployment and acres and acres of new cars standing exposed to the elements.

In our present situation one sometimes wonders whether Jesus Christ, the great Head of the Church, may not be saying much the same thing about our contemporary institutions of conventional religion as He said of them in the days of His flesh. As a matter of fact, when you go back to the records and consider them carefully you observe a very striking

similarity between the situation in Jesus' day and that of our own time. We too look out upon a world that seems bent upon its own destruction, with moral standards declining, crime increasing, secularism rampant and our political, economic and social structures showing signs of severe strain. Just as in Jesus day so with us, a lot of people have given up religion altogether and proud of the material triumphs of modern science they are plunging ahead in the confidence that they can save the world. In a word, that is the real threat of Communism and it is in no wise confined to Russia.

Then there are to-day the multitudes who are utterly indifferent to religion. They are not opposed to it and have no particular desire to see the Church go out of business but they just shrug their shoulders and dismiss the whole thing as quite irrelevant and unimportant.

And then we have the army of very nice people who are working overtime in an effort to keep the institutions of religion going. As I remarked earlier, we are raising more money, writing off more mortgages, building more new churches, adding more names to our church rolls, adding new dignity and beauty to our architecture and worship than ever before in history. I never cease to wonder over the amount of time and effort a host of lovely people are putting into the job of perpetuating the institutions of religion. But our question still remains: "Is this the answer to our modern dilemma and is this the way out?"

For the past decade I have had a chance to look at things not only from the inside of our conventional institutions but from the outside through the eyes of men who are just as concerned about the sad plight of the world as we preachers are. Indeed, some of them are working harder, taking more risks and doing a lot more suffering than we are in an effort to do something about it. But for some reason or other they are not much interested in our routine of religion as they see it. They tell me they find its atmosphere stuffy, its ritual not very inspiring, its language not very understandable and its learned theology quite irrelevant to those interests and issues which are their chief concern. Let me assure you this has been an interesting but very uncomfortable experience. Reflecting upon it I cannot escape the conclusion that the Church is fast becoming a comfortable, respectable, middle class institution largely out of touch with the masses of the common people. And let us not forget that this means that we are out of touch with one of the most powerful and aggressive democratic institutions in the modern world, the Organized Labour Movement. Knowing how sensitive we preachers are to observations of this kind, lest some of you may think that this conclusion is chiefly the result of bias on my part may I report that I have the endorsement of the World Council of Churches. In the summer of 1953 at Geneva its preparatory committee on Evangelism received a survey which indicated that the Protestant Church, as a world organization, has lodged itself in one segment of society. Here are direct quotes from that report: "There is a stalemate with regard to evangelistic progress in all the churches of Asia where the Church is almost completely middle class" (Malaya) "The urban Christianity is generally out of touch with labouring classes"

(India) "The Church does not reach to the mass of the people either among industrial workers or in the countryside" (Japan) "Among the city population the intellectuals and the working classes are identified as the two groups least touched" (Latin America) "Workers are regarded as being outside the church's life to a large extent" (Germany) "Except among the Pentecostals or in the Salvation Army the proletariat has deserted the Churches" (France) "There is a marked reluctance among the workers groups to take part in the regular services and work of the Church" (Switzerland) "The world of the workingman is largely a world outside the thinking of the Church" (Scotland)

Reading this report from the World Council of Churches and upon the background of my unique experience of the past decade I have had to ask myself many times whether not a few of the things that Jesus said to the religious leaders of His day do not apply equally to us to-day.

Lest I be entirely misunderstood let me hasten to say that I am not accusing the Church of failure nor suggesting for one moment that it be scrapped. The fact is that it was never so successful in the enterprises undertaken as to-day and it is of the greatest importance that she keep on doing the things she is doing. But like the author of that little book "This Incredible Church", it is not the failure of the Church that gives me deepest concern but rather the things in which she is having her greatest success. I believe it is as true to-day as it was in Jesus' day that the hope of the future rests not with the official leaders and institutions of conventional religion but with a minority group of adventurous souls who have caught a new vision of the Kingdom and are anxious to blaze new trails in an effort to prepare the Way of the Lord. There have been other periods in history when religion was given a new start not because of the crusading spirit of the traditional orthodoxies but in spite of them. In the days of Cyrus, the second Isaiah appeared upon the scene proclaiming a message of hope and comfort but he saw redemption coming through a foreigner and from a little remnant of the people whom he called the Suffering Servant of Jehovah. Or think of the period of the Reformation. The crusade for religious freedom in the 16th. C. where did that come from? Not from the institutions of conventional religion but from a little minority of dedicated souls who had thrown off their shackles, defying authorities long held sacred and transcending the cold formalities of long standing they proclaimed the priesthood of believers and strengthened the foundations of democracy in the world. And so I hear Martin Luther declare as he nails his thesis to the cathedral door "Here I stand, God helping me, I can do no other". And what suspicion and scorn were heaped upon John Wesley by the Church of his day. Shut out from the pulpits of the Established Church Wesley stood undaunted upon his father's tombstone and overleaping the respectable proprieties of conventional religion he proclaimed the Gospel to outcasts in the slums, to the miners at the pitheads and out in the open fields.

What we need to-day is to discover new ways of breaking through the crust of apathetic respectability and pious formalities which have no spiritual dynamic and drive. It is the distinctive role of the Christian

faith always to be out of step with the world and far in advance of those who are content with the conventional routine. One of the most encouraging signs on the horizon to-day is just the emergence of truly redemptive and crusading fellowships such as the Student-in-Industry Camps here in Canada, the Iona Fellowship in Scotland and the Catholic Worker Priest movement in France which recently came into collision with the Church hierarchy. We have too long tended to think of the spread of the Gospel and adherence to the Christian faith as coming about chiefly through the instrumentality of the Sunday morning or evening sermon or spectacular periodic revival services. What we need to-day is some imaginative and creative thinking about the application of radical religion to man's common life. We need an ever increasing number of redemptive fellowships dedicated to the task of thinking through the vocational implications of the Gospel. What is involved in being a Christian in the various professions? in being a financier? a politician? an industrialist? a labour leader? HERE IS THE MOST IMPORTANT AND MOST CRUCIAL CHRISTIAN FRONTIER IN OUR GENERATION. I am pinning my faith more and more to these redemptive minorities who are not afraid to venture into new fields and blaze new trails and, may I interject, this is exactly the special role the Religion-Labour Foundation was supposed to play.

The hope of the future is to be found not only in the Big Church, the vast institution with its orthodoxies and traditions, its complicated organization of respectable middle class folks. It depends very largely upon the Little Church within the Big Church, with a minimum of organization, lacking prestige and popular following, this minority of serious folk who are no longer satisfied nor at home in the midst of the proprieties and paraphernalia of dull conventionalism.

I want, therefore, to make an earnest plea for three things that may be done immediately.

FIRST:

That the Church provide a genuine hospitality to these unconventional and, perhaps, radical souls. In every congregation there ought to be a fellowship of such individuals to preserve the tension between things as they are and things as they ought to be.

SECOND:

That the Church give active co-operation and support to groups and organizations outside that are dedicated to the attempt to implement, in man's common life, the moral and spiritual idealism of the pulpit.

THIRD:

That provision be made for the Functional Ministry. Contact with the theological students in our various colleges had revealed that many of these young men have little enthusiasm for the conventional parish ministry but are set upon functioning, as ordained ministers, in such specialized fields as Industry. This might turn out to be an excellent way of dealing with the present shortage of recruits.

